

Continued from cover

Medicines: More Healing Power and Fewer Side Effects

Next, don't forget the basic and most important rule: Read the directions on the label, and follow them. Some medicines should be taken with food, others on an empty stomach. Some may make you sleepy, others keep you awake. In some cases, your pharmacist may provide additional literature about your medication, which you should read. This documentation may explain possible side effects to look for, and certain side effects which could require medical attention.

Always keep the number of your doctor and Poison Control Center close to the phone in case of an emergency. Don't hesitate to call if you're having a problem that you think may be drug related; quick action can often make the difference.

As a general rule, it's wise to use as few medications as possible, and you should take personal responsibility for maintaining ongoing awareness of the drugs you take. Each time you visit a doctor, review all the medicines you are taking and ask if all of them are necessary. Also, ask your physician about non-drug remedies such as diet, exercise, and other lifestyle changes.

Overall, a cautious attitude and pro-active approach goes a long way in helping you get the most healing power from your medicines, with the least problems.

Here are the top ten steps you can take to ensure you are using your medicines wisely:

1. Consider interactions between drugs: Tell your doctor and pharmacist about any other drugs you are presently taking, even over-the-counter medicines.
2. Always read the label before taking medicine.
3. Take your medicine exactly as you are told by your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse.
4. Do not give any of your medicine to others.
5. Do not leave your medicines where children can get them.
6. Always check the expiration date before taking the medicine.
7. Use the lowest dosage possible.
8. Store medicines according to directions.
9. Call your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions or problems.
10. For safe disposal, flush unused and expired medicines down the toilet.

**Idaho's
Poison Control
1-800-860-0620.**

Write it down and keep it close to your phone in case of emergency.

Proper Dental Care: Something to Smile About

Having a clean mouth is important for several reasons. It makes you feel good about yourself. It gives you fresh breath and nicer-looking smile. And it prevents serious problems, such as tooth decay and gum disease. But are you doing all you can to take good care of your teeth and gums? Here are some easy tips to help you keep a healthy smile.

The Plaque Problem

First, you need to understand the problem — plaque. Plaque is a sticky film of bacteria that grows on your teeth. This sticky film causes bad breath, and is the main cause of tooth decay and gum disease.

Plaque bacteria love sugars and starches found in many foods. When you don't clean your teeth after eating, the bacteria use the sugar and starch to produce acids that can destroy the hard surface of the tooth. After a while, tooth decay occurs. The more often you eat and the longer foods are in your mouth, the more damage occurs.

Plaque also produces substances that irritate the gums, making them red, tender, or bleed easily. After a while, gums may pull away from the teeth. Then pockets form and fill with more bacteria. If gums aren't treated, the bone around the teeth can be destroyed. The teeth may become loose or have to be removed. In fact, gum disease is the main cause of tooth loss in adults.

Consider this fact: 85% of U.S. adults have signs of gum disease, although many won't see or feel the onset of problems until severe damage has occurred.

Brushing

The best way to remove decay-causing plaque is by brushing your teeth. Brushing removes plaque from the tooth surfaces. Brush your teeth twice every day, with a soft-bristled brush (a hard brush can injure your gums). Use a toothpaste that contains fluoride, which helps protect your teeth from decay. When choosing a dental product, look for the American Dental Association Seal of Acceptance, an important symbol of safety and effectiveness. Here are some brushing tips:

- Place your toothbrush at a 45-degree angle against your gums.
- Move the brush up and down gently in short (toothwide) strokes.
- Brush the outer surfaces, the inner surfaces, and the chewing surfaces of the teeth.
- Brush for approximately two minutes, spending equal time on each quadrant of your mouth — upper front, lower front, upper back, and lower back.
- Brush your tongue to remove bacteria and freshen your breath.
- Treat yourself to a new toothbrush every three or four months.

Flossing

Cleaning between your teeth with floss or interdental cleaners removes plaque from between teeth, areas where the toothbrush can't reach. These hard-to-reach places are often where trouble starts, so it's important not to neglect them. Here are some flossing tips:

- Break off about 18 inches of floss and wind most of it around one of your middle fingers.
- Wind the remaining floss around the same finger of the opposite hand. This finger will take up the floss as it becomes dirty.
- Hold the floss tightly between your thumbs and forefingers. Guide the floss between two teeth. When the floss reaches the gumline, gently slide it into the space between the gum and one tooth and curve it into a C shape against the tooth. Never snap the floss into your gums.
- Hold the floss tightly against the tooth. Gently rub the side of the tooth, moving the floss away from the gum with up and down motions.
- Repeat this method on the rest of your teeth. Don't forget the back side of your last tooth.
- People who have difficulty handling dental floss may prefer to use another kind of interdental cleaner. These aids include special brushes, picks, or sticks. If you use interdental cleaners, ask your dentist how to use them properly to avoid injuring your gums.

Choosing Foods Wisely

Candy and cookies are not the only culprits in causing tooth decay. Some foods that you would least expect contain sugars and starches; for example, fruits, milk and even vegetables. The key to choosing foods wisely is not to avoid these foods, but to think before you eat. Also, when you eat can make as big a difference as what you eat. Keep these tips in mind for better dental health:

- Eat a balanced diet, including grain products, fruits, vegetables, meat or fish, and dairy.
- Limit the number of snacks you eat. Each time you eat food that contains sugars or starches, your teeth are attacked by acids for 20 minutes or more.
- If you do snack, choose nutritious foods, such as cheese, raw vegetables, plain yogurt, or a piece of fruit.
- Foods that are eaten as part of a meal cause less harm. More saliva is released from the mouth and helps lessen the effects of acids.

Beginning a Walking Program

We all know that regular exercise is good for us, but we often lack the motivation or believe we need special equipment to do what we think we should. The good news is that a healthy workout routine doesn't have to be complicated. In fact, the simplest and most accessible workout — walking — can help you meet all your fitness goals.

Walking builds muscle and bone and burns away calories and stress. Most people can burn as many as 550 calories in an hour of walking and feel rested enough to do it again the next day. Plus, regular, fitness walking will ease anxiety, yielding sounder sleep and a clearer mind.

The advice given in the following article should not be substituted for medical advice. Always consult your physician before beginning any type of exercise program.

To begin a walking program, start the first week with daily walks for 30-40 minutes. In week two, lengthen your walk to 45-60 minutes. In week three, walk 50-70 minutes, and in week four you should be walking for 60-90 minutes each day. Walks of 90 minutes or more are especially helpful for weight loss, because they force your body to burn stored fuel. Before you start each day, do calf and hamstring stretches for several minutes. Repeat your stretches at the end of each walk.

When walking, pick a steady pace that forces you to breathe deeply but is still comfortable enough for you to hold a conversation. Make your steps short and quick. Keep your chin lifted, your buttocks pulled under you, and stomach tight.

Here are some tips to help you personalize your program:

- **Intensity Bursts to Build Strength:** Walk to warm up for 10 minutes. Then climb a hill or stairs for 40 seconds at a high intensity. Walk back down to an easy pace and repeat. It's important not to stop to catch your breath; recover from intensity while walking. Can't find a good hill or stairs? Choose a path along a street lined with telephone poles. Speed walk at a high intensity for four phone poles, then slow down to a lower level for four poles. Repeat.
- **Backpack Weight to Burn Calories:** Add a backpack weighted with dumbbells and you can boost your calorie burn by a whopping 20% per session. Start with 10 pounds for the first week, and work up to as much as 30 pounds.
- **Pair Up to Fight Stress:** Make a pact with a pal to ignore pace, heart rate, etc. Your only goals are to walk continually and talk about anything but what's stressing you out.